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The Double Life of Malory's Lancelot du Lake

JANET JESMOK

Lancelot, Malory's paragon of chivalry, harbors a defiant alter-ego first evident only through double adversaries, but later erupting in violent action generally repressed by the chivalric code. Through this dark Other, Malory develops his hero's subjectivity as he interrogates fifteenth-century knighthood. (JJ)

The double as a literary phenomenon suggests complexity of character or, more specifically, the coexistence of opposing qualities or views within a character. The double may be a split personality, like Robert Lewis Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, where opposing personalities reside within one body; or a *Doppelgänger* or separate character, as in Edgar Allan Poe's 'William Wilson,' where the Other is a harbinger of death as well as a manifestation of Wilson's repressed 'dark side' threatening to take over his life. Sometimes the doubles may actually be brothers or twins, as in David Cronenberg's film *Dead Ringers*. On a deeper level, the dark Other reveals the primitive urges lurking beneath the veil, or, in Nietzsche's terms, a glimpse behind the mask of Apollo to reveal Dionysian chaos. Medieval writers like Chrétien de Troyes and Gottfried von Strassburg often reflect this complex doubleness through psychomachia, where warring emotions battle *within* the psyche. In Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte Darthur*,¹ Sir Lancelot du Lake, the best knight in the world and Malory's paragon of chivalry, harbors a defiant alter-ego. This dark Other at first remains within his psyche, evident only through double-adversaries, but it later erupts in action, expressing the armed fighter's violent urges generally repressed by the chivalric code. Developing his hero's subjectivity as he interrogates fifteenth-century knighthood, Malory, with psychological acuity, carefully traces Lancelot's fragmented, complex character through narrative moments in which Lancelot becomes other than himself. I will first examine the most troubling of these episodes, where Lancelot's dark side becomes visible through action, and then explore those where Lancelot shares a dark identity with adversaries.

Malory's portrayal of Lancelot in a small section of the 'Book of Sir Tristram de Lyones' has long troubled readers. As Tristram searches for Lancelot, which he does for much of the tale, he comes upon a lady grieving over a dead knight, Sir Galardonne:

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'Fayre lady,' seyde sir Trystramys, 'who hath slayne your lorde?' 'Sir,' she seyde, 'here came a knyght rydyng, as my lorde and I restyd us here, and askyd hym of whens he was, and my lorde seyde of kynge Arthurs courte. "Therefore," seyde the stronge knyght, "I woll juste with the, for I hate all tho that be of Arthurs courte." And my lorde that lyeth here dede amownted uppon hys horse, and the stronge knyght and my lorde recountyrd togydir, and there he smote my lorde thorowoute with his speare. And thus he hath brought me in grete woo and damage.' (2.564)

A mysterious rampaging knight with a 'coverde shyld' perpetrates this despicable act. Earlier he attacked and unhorsed both Tristram and Palomides (2.563). After challenging (and, as a result, killing) Galardonne *because* he is of Arthur's court, he engages Bleoberis and Gawain, sorely wounding Bleoberis and almost slaying Gawain (2.565). Tristram continues his pursuit, now coming upon Kay and Dinaden, who lodged with the stranger the previous night: 'And whan he wyste we were of kynge Arthurs courte, he spake grete vylony by the kynge, and specially by the quene Gwenyver' (2.566). Kay attempts to avenge this villainous speech, but he is easily unhorsed and defeated. Dinaden characteristically flees rather than encounter a knight he cannot hope to best. When Tristram finally catches up with the knight, 'all in whyght, and the coverde shyld' (2.568), they fight for four hours before Tristram discovers that his mysterious opponent is Sir Lancelot, the man he has been seeking, the world's greatest knight and Malory's model of knighthood.

From what we know of Lancelot, these actions are inexplicable, although various critics have attempted to align them with Malory's characterization, themes, or narrative habits. Eugène Vinaver, for example, tries to dissociate them altogether from Lancelot's name, explaining that, for Malory, despoiling Lancelot's character 'was a lesser evil than leaving a character unidentified' (3.1484 n571). Felicity Riddy sees the episode as enacting an essential paradox of chivalric life: knights must, on the surface, be noble and honorable while suppressing the anger and hatred necessary for successful combat in war and tournaments, those 'social rituals which provide sanctioned outlets for aggressiveness and competition.'² In this scene, Lancelot's normally suppressed anger and hatred explode, raising questions about the arm that wields the sword. Andrew Lynch interprets Lancelot's actions as part of a pattern in the *Morte* in which Lancelot's name remains honorable and unsullied, even when he performs reprehensible actions such as these: 'Lancelot has "the grettyste name of ony knyght of the worlde"' (287), and he maintains this "name" throughout the text... Outrageous actions that he performs while in disguise (564 ff), including callous killings (564/11–29, 570/34–35), do no damage at all to his public name when once he makes it known again (570–72).'³ Lynch is right. Tristram, the first to discover that Lancelot is the knight

with the covered shield, makes no comment about Lancelot's killing of Sir Galardonne, his attacks on other Round Table knights, or his inflammatory comments about Arthur and especially Guinevere. But Lynch's argument does not help bring these unsavory actions in line with the noble Lancelot, the greatest of all earthly knights.⁴

Malory, in fact, identifies Lancelot with one of the *Morte's* most disreputable characters. For Lancelot's actions in the Sir Galardonne episode more clearly suit Sir Breunys Saunz Pité, 'a grete foo unto many good knyghtes of kyng Arthures courte' (1.406), who ravages the countryside in the 'Book of Sir Tristram,' flouting chivalric ideals as he kills and maims. Further, an episode involving Sir Breunys and strikingly similar to that of Sir Galardonne and his wife appears a few pages earlier, where Sir Breunys leaves 'a dede knyght, and a lady wepyng besydys hym' (2.562). Malory establishes a strange parallel here, leading readers now familiar with Sir Breunys's *modus operandi* to assume that Sir Breunys is the unknown knight who has killed Sir Galardonne. Hanks argues that an anti-heroic knight like Sir Breunys 'causes a reader to question...the ideology of the armed man.'⁵ Although he seems an anomaly, 'Breunys—with his persecution of women and murderous use of arms—clearly represents a major element of contemporary medieval knighthood.'⁶ Here Sir Lancelot becomes a second Sir Breunys, posing as the Round Table's enemy and killing randomly.

Malory links Lancelot with the shady Sir Breunys in order to reveal the dark side Sir Lancelot struggles to suppress. In fact, Malory early lays the foundation for Sir Lancelot's psychomachia in the 'Tale of Sir Lancelot,' where several scenes suggest the more fully manifested doubleness just discussed. Felicity Riddy says that when Lancelot 'fights in unmarked arms at Bagdemagus's tournament and later in Kay's armour...he is and is not Lancelot.'⁷ In his violent encounter with Sir Tarquin, he can escape peacefully only by being anyone but who he is ('so be hit that thou be nat sir Launcelot' (1.266) Tarquin says), the man who killed Tarquin's brother Carados. Lancelot's reply is tantalizing: 'Now se I well...that suche a man I myght be, I myght have pease; and suche a man I myght[e be] that there sholde be mortall warre betwyxte us. And now, sir knyght, at thy requeste I woll that thou wete and know that I am sir Launcelot du Lake, kynge Bannys son of Benwyke, and verry knyght of the Table Rounde' (1.267). Before he forcefully announces his identity and lineage, Lancelot seems to play with the idea of being other than he is, what Riddy calls a 'profound sense...of a potential other self he carries with him; of choices that might have been made, of paths that might have been trodden, of the person that might have been.'⁸

Two adversaries in the 'Tale of Lancelot,' Phelot and Pedivere, manifest this potential other self. Both evoke his anger and frustration because both

flout chivalric rules, ridiculing his ferocious desire for fair play. They function as his dark doubles, revealing the uncontrolled violence of the armed man. When Phelot's wife tricks Lancelot into climbing a tree unarmed and he cries, 'Alas...that ever a knyght sholde dey wepynles!' (1.283), he experiences for the first time the fear and frustration of his adversaries, who lack his 'weapons' of skill and courage. Now *he* is outmatched. And even though he eventually wins, he cannot suppress his anger when he kills Phelot: Lancelot strikes him on the head and, while Phelot is 'in a sowghe,' he takes his opponent's sword and 'strake his necke in two pecys' (1.284). He does not give Phelot time to ask for mercy; he strikes as Phelot would have struck, unchivalrously seizing the moment. In this way, he *becomes* Phelot, assuming his violence and villainy as he kills without recourse.

In the tale's final episode, Sir Pedivere, a dark Other like Phelot, also frustrates Lancelot's chivalry through a woman. Lancelot tries to intervene when Pedivere threatens to kill his wife, whom he accuses of adultery. Lancelot promises the lady protection. Pedivere, however, dupes Lancelot into turning away and then beheads his wife. Taking personally his failure to defend Pedivere's wife, Lancelot attacks his adversary, saying 'thou haste shamed me for evir.'⁹ He at first denies Pedivere mercy, trying to force him to fight by volunteering to unarm for his opponent's advantage: 'I woll unarme me unto my shyrtte [and I woll have nothyng upon me but my sherte] and my swerde in my honde, and yf thou can sle me, quyte be thou for ever' (1.285). Pedivere wisely refuses. Finally, perhaps the thought of Guinevere, already accused of illicit love in this tale, motivates Lancelot to let Pedivere live until the Queen can judge him. By bringing Pedivere to court, Lancelot can both vindicate the accused adulteress and ennoble his own already sullied lady.

Pedivere's penance has iconic qualities that resonate throughout Lancelot's double life. The man who has betrayed Lancelot's trust by treacherously murdering his wife must now bear his dead wife's head and body on his own body, first to Guinevere and then all the way to Rome, in order to gain forgiveness. Felicity Riddy calls this grotesque image 'another version of the *Doppelgänger*. The grisly burden that Sir Pedivere carries can be seen as an externalisation of his deformed self. More than that, its doubleness reiterates that other ambivalence...between shame and honour; he is a reminder of Lancelot's different selves.'¹⁰ Riddy's comment is intriguing. She suggests that as the body of Pedivere's beheaded wife makes manifest that knight's own corruption, so the jealous and violent Pedivere is Lancelot's alter-ego, a suppressed self that will later emerge to attack and murder his fellow knights. Further, this episode not only presents a scenario in which the hero shares in his opponent's psyche but also foretells his own compromised future, when Lancelot, as adulterous betrayer of his lord, will supersede Arthur's loyal champion. When Pedivere threatens to kill his wife, Lancelot upbraids

him: 'Knyght, fye for shame, why wolte thou sle this lady?' Pedivere's retort—'What haste thou to do betwyxte me and my wyff? I woll sle her magré thyne hede' (1.284)—foreshadows Arthur's words in Book 8: 'I may nat with my worshyp but my quene muste suffir dethe...she shall have the law' (3.1174, 1175). Later, when Lancelot is intent on killing Pedivere, he volunteers to disarm partially in order to entice his opponent into fighting to the death. This scene prefigures Lancelot's battle with Melleagaunt in the 'The Knight of the Cart,' where Lancelot, fighting in a highly questionable cause, leads Melleagaunt to his death by disarming before single combat.¹¹ Finally, the episode forces the queen to confront the results of adulterous accusations, whether proven or not, when she views Pedivere's infamy as he bears his wife's headless body. It depicts the armed man's revenge against a woman, one whom Lancelot, as great as he is, cannot protect.

The notion of the *Doppelgänger*, two separate characters coexisting as aspects of a single character, links Lancelot with all those ominous Others that haunt his early tale:¹² Pedivere, the seemingly wronged husband who murders his wife; Phelot, who uses his wife as a shield for his covert violent plots; Perys de Foreste Sauvage, a rapist and abuser of women; even Hallewes, who wants to mummify Lancelot for her own sexual pleasure. These Others embody Lancelot's own dark, unconscious urges, his potential other selves that might expose Guinevere to Arthur's wrath and finally make public his perfidy; who might use protecting his lady as an excuse for violent encounters with other knights; who might abduct Guinevere and secrete her at Joyous Garde, where she will be all his own, to 'clypp' and 'kyss.' Countering the idealized Lancelot, this narrative potentiality illustrates Elizabeth Edwards's assessment that this 'strange double of Lancelot's different identities...[is] the refusal of chivalry.'¹³ Chivalry's protagonist can also be its antagonist.

The doubleness Lancelot experiences in his encounter with Tarquin and through his disguises is mainly internal: he contemplates that he can be other than himself or plays at other identities through masquerade. When he dresses as Sir Kay in the 'Tale of Lancelot,' he amuses himself in light-hearted encounters where he fights against lesser knights, sometimes of Arthur's court. But as the Galardonne episode shows, Lancelot's propensity for disguise can prove lethal.¹⁴ When he becomes the strong knight with the covered shield in the 'Book of Tristram,' he leaves conventional behavior behind. He is no longer playing. He moves beyond the pale, releasing another self, if you will, who attacks Round Table knights with violent intent and openly insults Arthur and the Queen, temporarily assuming the qualities of Round Table antagonists like Breunys, Garlon the Invisible Knight, and Melleagaunt. But why this split? Where does this anger come from? And why does Malory, who so carefully protects Lancelot throughout the text, allow his paragon to embody this evil, dark side?¹⁵

Although he struggles to control himself throughout the *Morte*, Lancelot clearly is a man capable of great anger and violence.¹⁶ When in battle or during his madness, Lancelot is a killing machine. In the 'Book of Tristram,' however, as the 'strong knight with the covered shield,' the violent side surfaces and dominates for a time in his everyday life. He challenges one knight after another, defeating each in a frenzy, with no stopping, no thought. Chaos rules, and he seems to enjoy it. These scenes show violence without restraint, violence that the rules of chivalry and the Round Table code attempt to control. Moreover, Lancelot begins to hate the power that holds him in, Arthur and Guinevere, and he verbally attacks them as he physically attacks Arthur's knights. His actions counter his image, revealing the struggle within. In fact, if the events in the 'Book of Tristram' actually take place before those in the 'Tale of Lancelot,' as some have argued,¹⁷ then these puzzling episodes might be formative, showing Lancelot's struggle to discover his allegiances. If Dorsey Armstrong, following Judith Butler, is right in asserting that knightly activities do not emanate from an identity or self, but rather, 'the performance of these activities renders intelligible the "self" who performs them,'¹⁸ then Lancelot (or Malory) is experimenting with a performance of 'not-Lancelot,' of all that is antithetical to his recognized name and identity. An interesting contemporary parallel occurs in Ang Lee's film *The Hulk*. Discussing his film in the *New Yorker*, Lee, seemingly the gentlest of men, observes that 'the Hulk is the aggression and the fear and the unknown drive you have in life, which are hiding in the dark, which are not how you want to see yourself.' Lee describes his creativity as his alter ego, 'hidden inside—the beast... To reach something bigger than who I am, sometimes I cause pain and injury. And I have to hurt myself. It's like Hell. I [feel] on the verge of exploding—going through a depression—just to reach something.'¹⁹ In these incidents, Lancelot, I think, has a similar experience.

That Lancelot's dark side should emerge in the 'Book of Tristram' is not surprising. 'Tristram' is not only the *Morte*'s longest but also its most morally ambiguous section. Lancelot often appears as a shadowy figure, more spoken of than present, often in disguise or involved in mistaken identity scenarios. In an early confusion, Tristram meets a damsel looking for Lancelot. She mistakes Tristram for him because of Tristram's great prowess, but he demurs, stating that he wishes he were as good a knight as Lancelot (1.388), thus keeping Lancelot in the reader's mind as the chivalric ideal.²⁰ Later Lancelot appears as a model of prowess when disguised as a white knight who overthrows Sir Froll, Lamorak's companion (1.448), who later absurdly dies at Lamorak's hands in a confusing conflict of loyalties (1.450).²¹ When Lamorak meets and wants to accompany him, Lancelot refuses, saying 'I am in a queste that I muste do myselff alone' (1.449). Lancelot wants to distance himself from his fellows, to move away from the center. His lonely quest, as

we have seen, leads him to encounter an unruly double within himself who would destroy all that he holds dear.

Lancelot's randomly violent acts while in disguise, his psychomachia in action, are only one manifestation of his doubleness. As we have seen in the 'Tale of Lancelot,' another occurs when Lancelot encounters characters who embody or make public his own repressed urges, such as Pedivere and Phelot, *Doppelgänger* who express Lancelot's own ambivalence about honor and shame. But Malory draws a clearer double for Lancelot in Sir Melleagaunt, who, in several episodes, acts out what Lancelot only dreams of. Melleagaunt is the first knight other than Arthur openly to express his love for Guinevere. In his first speaking appearance, Melleagaunt 'made hys mone of the love that he had to quene Gwenyver, and there he made a wofull complaynte' (2.485). Subsequently, he gets into a tiff with Lamorak about which of their ladies is fairer. Like two schoolboys, they first argue and then fall into a violent fight that goes on 'a grete whyle' until Lancelot appears and comes between them. He criticizes their encounter because 'ye ar bothe of the courte of kyngge Arthure' (2.486). But when they reveal the cause of the conflict, Lancelot immediately sides with Melleagaunt. Although Lancelot should be the last to want Guinevere's name bandied about in the context of unlawful love, he swiftly shifts from peacemaker to combatant—"A!" seyde sir Launcelot, "sir Lamorak, why sayst thou so?" Lancelot then stands in for Melleagaunt, challenging Lamorak himself and disregarding his own earlier warning that Arthur's knights should not fight each other: 'therefore make the redy, for I woll preve uppon the that quene Guenyver ys the fayryst lady and most of bounté in the worlde' (2.487).²² Lamorak's good sense finally prevails before they cross swords, but the blurring of Lancelot's and Melleagaunt's identities suggests another Lancelot, one who moans aloud of his love for his lady, who brings his love into the public domain to argue over her beauty.

Melleagaunt's later abduction of Guinevere in the 'Knight of the Cart' episode (3.1119–40) intensifies Lancelot's identification with him. Melleagaunt holds Guinevere prisoner in his castle, presumably with intent to rape her, but it is Lancelot's blood on her sheets. When Lancelot is treacherously imprisoned, he drops through a trap door into the bowels of Melleagaunt's castle, internally sequestered while Melleagaunt acts out the part of the 'other man' in Guinevere's life, one who arrogantly takes possession of her as Lancelot never dares to do. Ironically, the antagonists both want the same thing. In killing Melleagaunt, Lancelot (and Guinevere, who sanctions the act) tries to destroy the overt, lustful adulterer who would humiliate Arthur by *raptus* of the queen, in both senses of that word. The double often reflects repressed sexual drives, like Mr. Hyde, who acts out perversities against women that Dr. Jekyll will not allow himself consciously to contemplate. Melleagaunt as double makes Lancelot's desires public, and, significantly,

Malory's most explicit description of the lovers' sexual activity (3.1131–32) occurs in the 'Knight of the Cart,' the episode where Melleagaunt is a key player and adultery with the queen the pivotal issue. Melleagaunt breaks the rules of both chivalry, when he entraps and imprisons Lancelot rather than fight fairly, and courteous love, when he publicizes his love for Guinevere and creates scandal by abducting her. He reflects the dark, uncontrolled side of the armed man, what Thomas Hanks calls 'a major element of contemporary medieval knighthood.'²³ Through scenes in which Lancelot moves into Melleagaunt's place—as a combatant against Lamorak, in Guinevere's bed in Melleagaunt's castle—Malory underscores their similarity. This blurring of character reminds the reader that only a thin veneer of chivalric civilization keeps a Lancelot from becoming a Melleagaunt; the 'good guy' can readily turn into the 'bad guy.' Like the cliché of modern crime stories, the detective and the criminal are brothers, residing in an isolated world of violence.

Through his use of the double motif, Malory probes the dark side of humanity, exposing the chaos beneath. He reveals the armed knight as menace as well as savior. People need the armed man to protect them; yet he can turn against them in a moment, both wittingly and unwittingly. And if this can happen to Sir Lancelot, it can, as Malory demonstrates, happen to anyone. In the early 'Tale of Balin' (1.57–92), for example, two indistinguishable brothers, Balin and Balan—both of great prowess, one seemingly blameless, the other ill-fated—suggest the duality of human nature. Balin, the ill-fated brother, is a medieval Cain figure who, despite good intentions and great prowess, casts a shadow of doom on all who come near him. The tale ends in unwilling, archetypal fratricide: unknown to each other, Balin and Balan fight to the death, discovering their relationship only as they die. In this same tale, another set of brothers suggests that evil naturally accompanies good. The invisible knight, Sir Garlon, slashes without reason or provocation at defenseless victims and then rides off. Interestingly, he is bad brother to good brother King Pellam, the Grail king and 'the moste worshipfullist man on lyve in tho dayes' (1.54), an unexpected pairing of evil with the holy king inextricably tied to the most sacred Christian artifacts, the Sankgreal, the spear of Longinus, and by extension the blood of Christ. The good and the bad, the light and the dark, reside together. To these add Melleagaunt, Breunys Saunz Pité, King Mark, and all those unexpected, often vile actions that some of Arthur's best knights, even Lancelot, contemplate and/or perform. Through these dark figures and dark actions, Malory interrogates the very notion of knighthood. The kind of power the knights wield is safe only with the Gareths or the Galahads. With all others, the deadly sword sometimes careens out of control, cutting down the innocent and the loved ones that it was designed to protect. Malory appreciated the force of weapons and what wielding them might do to a man. In depicting

his beloved Lancelot as a random killer, he makes us feel their bite. In the *Morte*, Lancelot's dark Other in the 'Book of Tristram' manifests the uneasiness Lancelot feels about the constraints of his identity and of his life and Malory's own ambivalence about the power of the sword.

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NOTES

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- 1 In this paper, all quotations from Sir Thomas Malory's text come from *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*, ed. Eugène Vinaver, rev. P.J.C. Field, 3d edn., 3 vols. (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1990), and will be noted by volume and page numbers parenthetically in the text. Although I am using Vinaver's edition of Malory's work, I prefer to retain the traditional title, *Le Morte Darthur*.
- 2 Felicity Riddy, *Sir Thomas Malory* (New York: E.J. Brill, 1987), p. 108.
- 3 Andrew Lynch, *Malory's Book of Arms: The Narrative of Combat in Le Morte Darthur* (Cambridge, UK: D.S. Brewer, 1997), p. 5. (Lynch does not include volume numbers in his citations)
- 4 What Lee Patterson, *Chaucer and the Subject of History* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), p. 152, says of the *Troilus* and its hero can also be said of Lancelot: 'The doubleness of the narrative is a symmetrical counterpart to the equivocal subjectivity that is so much the poem's center of attention. A doubled self—in a sense that includes both moral duplicity and the endless psychological multiplicity that defines subjectivity itself—is at once encased within and enacted as a doubled history.'
- 5 D. Thomas Hanks, Jr., 'Malory's Anti-Knights: Balin and Breunys,' in *The Social and Literary Contexts of Malory's Morte Darthur*, ed. D. Thomas Hanks, Jr., and Jessica Gentry Brogdan (Cambridge, UK: D.S. Brewer, 2000), p. 97 [94–110].
- 6 Hanks, 'Malory's Anti-Knights,' p. 99.
- 7 Riddy, *Sir Thomas Malory*, pp. 55–56.
- 8 Riddy, *Sir Thomas Malory*, p. 56.
- 9 An interesting shade to this scene is that the wife's guilt or innocence is not clear. Is she a lady wronged or a lady found out? She sounds sincere, but so did Phelors wife in the previous episode. The themes of shame and ambiguous guilt adumbrate events in Book 8, when Lancelot fears he won't be able to defend

Guinevere: 'Now Jesu deffende me from shame...and save my lady the quene from vylany and shamefull dethe' (3.1172).

- 10 Riddy, *Sir Thomas Malory*, p. 56.
- 11 Malory describes the disarming: 'Than the knyghtes parters of the fylde disarmed sir Launcelot, firste hys hede and than hys lyffte arme and hys lyffte syde, and they bounde his lyffte arme to hys lyffte syde fast behynde hys bak, withoute shyldes or onythyng' (3.1139). Lancelot kills Melleagaunt with the same abrupt violence of Phelot's death (p. 5, above): 'Than sir Mellyagaunce com wyth swerde all on hyght, and sir Launcelot shewed hym opynly hys bare hede and the bare lyffte syde. And whan he went to have smytten hym uppon the bare hede, than lyghtly he devoyded the lyffte legge and the lyffte syde and put hys honde and hys swerde to that stroke, and so put hit on syde wyth grete slyght. And than with grete force sir Launcelot smote hym on the helmet such a buffett that the stroke carved the hed in two partyes' (3.1139-40). Here Lancelot sadistically plays with the opponent he will so quickly dispatch.
- 12 This interpretation is not uncommon in archetypal and Jungian criticism. See, for example, Stephen Manning, 'A Psychological Interpretation of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*,' in *Critical Studies of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, ed. Donald R. Howard and Christian K. Zacher (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968), p. 282 [279-94], who reads Gawain's meeting with Bercilak as 'the ego's encounter with the shadow, Gawain is the ego, and Bercilak is the shadow, the dark or bad aspect of the psyche which has received its most popular formulation in Stevenson's Mr. Hyde. The shadow contains everything that the ego finds unacceptable, whether disagreeable, terrifying, detestable, or immoral; it thus conflicts with the ego's goals and dispositions, and personifies everything that the individual will not recognize in himself, especially inferior traits of character. To recognize this dark aspect as present and real is to take the first step towards any kind of self-knowledge.'
- 13 Edwards, *The Genesis of Narrative in Malory's Morte Darthur* (Cambridge, UK: D.S. Brewer, 2001), p. 88.
- 14 Dorsey Armstrong, *Gender and the Chivalric Community in Malory's Morte Darthur* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2003), p. 89, has noted that Lancelot cannot effectively disguise himself: Lancelot 'is unable to assume an effective, convincing disguise...His unique combination of physical prowess and knightly courtesy is so distinct as to be unmistakable, even when he is clad in the armor of another.' But in the episode of the knight with the covered shield, he does succeed. When Lancelot's ruse is finally revealed to Arthur and the court, one of the knights comments: 'Sir, ye have begyled us all wyth youre coverede shyldes.' He has indeed. His excuse—'wete you well, I was the same knyght that bare the coverde shyldes, and bycause I wolde nat be knowyn that I was of youre courte, I seyde no worshyp be youre house' (2.571)—tries to justify his disguise if not his reprehensible behavior, but he makes no attempt to explain why he wanted to divorce himself from Arthur's court, even at the cost of killing

- an innocent man. Like his wearing of Elaine of Astolat's sleeve in Book 7, this disguise puts him dangerously at odds with his fellow knights.
- 15 In *The Once and Future King* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1958), T.H. White confirms Lancelot's dark side. He characterizes his Lancelot as a hideous young man, his face 'as ugly as a monster's in the King's menagerie. He looked like an African ape.' Further, his unpleasant features suggest something internal gone awry: Lancelot 'felt that there must be some reason for [his ugliness] somewhere,' that there is a 'thing which must have gone wrong in the depths of his spirit to make a face like that' (p. 307). White also links Lancelot's looks with his desire for prowess and sees his chivalrous behavior as compensation for his innate cruelty: 'he liked to hurt people. It was for the strange reason that he was cruel, that the poor fellow never killed a man who asked for mercy, or committed a cruel action which he could have prevented' (p. 329).
 - 16 In addition to the episodes already discussed, in this early tale Lancelot almost kills Sir Belleus (1.259–60) and savagely kills a churl (1.271). In the Winchester tournament in Book 7, he nearly kills his beloved Bors, Ector, and Lyonel; it is only the sight of their faces as he tears off their helmets that stops him (2.1072). When rescuing Guinevere from Melleagaunt, Lancelot thoughtlessly kills a carter who refuses him a ride in his cart (3.1126). And, of course, this pattern culminates in his killing of the unarmed Gareth and Gaheris (3.1177).
 - 17 See, for example, Thomas Rumble, "The Tale of Tristram": Development by Analogy,' in *Malory's Originality: A Critical Study of Le Morte Darthur*, ed. R.M. Lumiansky (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1964), pp. 160–62 [118–83], and R.M. Lumiansky, 'The Question of Unity in Malory's *Morte Darthur*,' TSE, 5 (1955): 35–39, as cited in Rumble, p. 160 n52. If Tarquin is already gunning for Lancelot in Book 3 to avenge his brother Carados's death (1.266–67), then the killing of Carados in 'Tristram' (1.418–19), and thus the events in the 'Book of Tristram,' must come first.
 - 18 Armstrong, *Gender and the Chivalric Community*, p. 85. This idea first appears in Jill Mann's 'Malory: Knightly Combat in *Le Morte D'Arthur*,' in *The New Pelican Guide to English Literature*, 1.2, ed. Boris Ford (New York: Penguin, 1982; rev. ed.), pp. 333–34. Thanks to Tom Hanks for this reference.
 - 19 John Lahr, 'Becoming the Hulk,' *The New Yorker*, June 30, 2003, 74 [72–81].
 - 20 Numerous instances in this tale hold up Lancelot as the ideal, the knight that Tristram wants to befriend and emulate. When Tristram fights with Bleoberis, for example, he makes peace with him when he learns he is Lancelot's kin: 'sir Launcelot ys called pereles of curtesy and of knyghthode, and for his sake...I wyll nat with my good wyll feyght no more with you, for the grete love I have to sir Launcelot' (1.401). Other examples are 1.408, 1.415, 1.418.
 - 21 Lamorak's relationship with Froll ends in Froll's meaningless death, continuing the cycle of random violence and mayhem that reigns in Book 5. Interestingly, this episode hinges on Lamorak's loyalty to another Round Table knight. After Lamorak and Froll part, Gawain abducts Froll's lady as they are resting by a well. Lamorak follows Gawain to retrieve the lady, but when he learns that Gawain is

'nevew unto kynge Arthure' (1.450), he allows Gawain to proceed unchallenged. Next Froll mounts and attacks Gawain, unhorsing him and retrieving his lady. Lamorak then challenges Froll, who is certainly in the right, in order to "revenge my felow [who] woll sey me dishonoure in kynge Arthurs courte"...And there they cam togedyrs with all theire myght, and sir Lamorak smote the knyght thorow bothe sydis that he fylle to the erthe dede' (1.450). Froll is dead because of the disreputable actions of an Arthurian knight then defended by his fellow. Ironically, the knight avenged is Lamorak's enemy, Sir Gawain, who, with his brothers, will later kill Lamorak.

22 These words echo Melleagaunt's earlier protestation: 'I woll preve and make hit good that she ys the fayryste lady and moste of beauté in the worlde' (2.486).

23 Hanks, 'Malory's Anti-Knights,' p. 99.